

West End Transitway - Frequently Asked Questions

Process and Transit

1. What are the outcomes of the current phase of planning?

The current phase includes technical analysis to confirm the City's policy decision regarding BRT along the Van Dorn – Beauregard corridor and complete the required environmental documentation to clear the project for further advancement and potential Federal funding.

Project next steps include additional engineering and design and developing a more detailed financial plan.

2. What was the process that the City undertook to reach this point for the West End Transitway?

Candidate high-capacity, dedicated-lane Transitways were first identified as a part of the City's 2008 Transportation Master Plan. The *Transportation Master Plan* identified three corridors for future study and consideration:

- Corridor A: US 1
- Corridor B: Duke Street
- Corridor C: Van Dorn/Beauregard (renamed West End Transitway in 2014)

Subsequent to the 2008 plan, each of the three corridors was studied in greater detail as a part of the *Alexandria Transitway Corridors Feasibility Study* (adopted in 2012). This study concluded with recommendations for each corridor and resolutions of support for recommendations in Corridors B and C.

Two area-wide plans also documented the need for transit investments in the West End of Alexandria, the *Landmark/Van Dorn Corridor Plan* (adopted by City Council in 2009) and the *Beauregard Small Area Plan* (adopted by City Council in 2012). Both plans specifically identified the need for and location of future fixed-guideway transit in the West End along portions of Beauregard Street, Sanger Avenue, Mark Center Drive & Ave, and Van Dorn Street. Based on the outcome of the 2012 *Transitway Corridors Feasibility Study*, the two area-wide plans, and the 2008 *Transportation Master Plan*, in 2014, Alexandria initiated an Alternatives Analysis (AA) and a process to prepare an environmental document, compliant with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the West End Transitway. The technical work completed during the alternatives analysis and environmental documentation process is a result of ongoing coordination with the public, related agency stakeholders, City Council and Commissions. .

3. What is Bus Rapid Transit?

The term bus rapid transit (BRT) refers to an integrated system of facilities, equipment, services, and amenities that improve the speed, reliability, and identity of bus transit.

Unlike standard bus services, BRT generally includes the following service enhancements and amenities:

- Dedicated lanes reserved for transit vehicles only.
- Queue jump lanes to allow BRT vehicles to bypass traffic.
- Transit signal priority (TSP) at key intersections to improve travel time along the corridor.
- Substantial bus stations that include passenger amenities such as larger waiting areas, higher platforms for near level boarding, real time bus information, and machines for off-board fare collection.
- Vehicles branded for easy recognition by riders.
- Frequent and long span of service operations.

4. How will BRT service interact with local bus service?

Existing Metrobus and DASH bus routes will be reconfigured and optimized to support and complement the BRT service and to enhance the service provided by the overall transit network.

West End Transitway stops are located ¼-mile to ½ mile apart. Many of these locations will provide convenient transfers between local and BRT service.

5. How can the City implement the most cost-effective BRT project?

During the study process, the City has sought to balance the benefits of a BRT investment with the initial capital and ongoing operating costs.

Aside from the Build BRT alternative, the analysis has included No Build and Transportation Systems Management (TSM) alternatives. The comparison has allowed decision makers to understand potential benefits of lower-cost approaches to improving transit performance through the study corridor. With lessons learned from the TSM alternative, Build alternative improvements are focused on locations where dedicated lanes can have a significant impact on transit speed and reliability.

What has emerged is a Build alternative that provides transit users with faster, more reliable service, and an investment in infrastructure that supports ongoing growth and development in the corridor.

Design Considerations

6. Is the West End Transitway project associated with the ongoing or recently completed work along I-395?

The West End Transitway project is not associated with the ongoing or recently completed work along I-395. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is the owner of the I-395 projects, including the retaining wall project.

7. Will the West End Transitway project change the noise walls that were recently installed along I-395 near the Sanger Avenue/Richenbacher Avenue/Van Dorn Street intersection?

The West End Transitway project will not make any modification to the noise walls that were recently installed by VDOT near the Sanger Avenue/Richenbacher Avenue/Van Dorn Street

intersection. The West End Transitway project has no association with the ongoing or proposed future projects along I-395.

8. How will the West End Transitway buses turn left from the rightmost lane on N. Van Dorn Street after stopping at the station just south of Richenbacher Avenue?

The West End Transitway buses will have their own signal phase to make the movement, just like left-turning vehicles typically do at signalized intersections. After the bus stops at the station, it will communicate with the traffic signal and during the signal's next cycle, the bus will receive a signal indication (essentially, an arrow) enabling it to turn left from the right-turn lane without being in-conflict with any other traffic movements. While the bus is making the left turn, traffic and pedestrians from all directions will be stopped with a Red signal to allow the bus to safely proceed.

9. How many parking spaces will be impacted along N. Van Dorn Street between Taney Avenue and Richenbacher Avenue?

The Build Alternative will remove the 3 parallel parking spaces just south of Richenbacher Avenue.

10. How will bicycles be accommodated along the Transitway?

The West End Transitway project will construct bikeways along its route where major street reconstruction will occur as a part of the project. Bikeway configurations and locations proposed by the project are coordinated with adopted small area and corridor plans adopted along the corridor. The project's ability to construct bikeways corridor-wide is constrained by factors such as the potential for adverse property impacts, limitations of existing infrastructure such as bridges, underpasses, and major culverts, and natural features such as streams and hilly terrain. Taking into consideration these and other constraints, the Build Alternative is currently proposed to provide approximately 2.3 miles of new bike facilities at the following locations along its route:

- S. Van Dorn Street (except on existing railroad bridge and just north of Edsall Road) between Eisenhower Avenue and Stevenson Avenue): 12-foot wide multi use path on the east side
- N. Van Dorn Street from Landmark Mall Driveway to S. Holmes Run Drive: 10-foot wide multi use path on the west side
- N. Van Dorn Street from N. Holmes Run Drive to Sanger Avenue: 10-foot wide multi use path on the west side
- Beauregard Street between Sanger Avenue and Rayburn Avenue: 10-foot wide multi use path on the east side

Traffic Conditions

11. How will transit signal priority affect traffic delays?

The analysis has focused on minimizing delays for general traffic while improving travel time for transit users. This is a balancing process; it has generally led to no additional delay at most intersections, and minor additional delay at these specific intersections:

- South Van Dorn Street and South Holmes Run
- South Van Dorn Street and Sanger Avenue
- Beauregard Street and Sanger Avenue

The West End Transitway requires a special transit phase at these intersections where the main traffic movement (Van Dorn Street or Beauregard Avenue) is stopped temporarily to allow buses to make a turn or avoid traffic. At other intersections, priority signals for transit coincide with the main traffic movements, thereby limiting the impact of TSP on non-transit vehicles.

The intersection of South Van Dorn Street and Eisenhower Avenue has also been the focus of traffic analysis. Based on technical analysis and community outreach, the recommended approach at this intersection is to operate West End Transitway service along Metro Road, and thus avoid this congested intersection.